

Contributions



WHAT IS MAN? A Sermon

J. L. KIMMEL

What is man that thou art mindful of him or the son of man that thou visitest him. Hebrews 2:6.

We have in the language of my text a very important and profound question. And although this language was not original with the author of the book of Hebrews he employs it in such a forcible manner that it at once deeply impresses itself upon our minds.

It would at first thought appear to be a question of very ordinary significance, such as every child should be familiar with. But no sooner do we enter upon the theme of the origin, mission and destination of man, but we become overwhelmed with wonderment and amazement. Our ideas of man become more and more exalted and we soon find if we had never discovered before that man is not a creature but the creature of God's creation.

It is a sad thought but only too true that when we consider man from a human point of view in his barbaric and sinful state our ideas of him are anything but exalted.

I looked upon the South Sea Islanders in their savage condition half clad with the skins of wild beasts and when I saw their wild looks and heard their hideous cries I said I should sooner meet a wild beast in the forest than one of these so called men. And thus it is that when we consider man in his uncivilized and unchristianized state we wonder why any one should be mindful of him. That men and women of culture and refinement and who are striving to reach the highest type of man should not put forth every effort within their power to withdraw from the general condition of human society and shudder at the thought of ever meeting again man in his degraded and depraved nature.

But if man should manifest such a disposition how much more God who sitteth upon a throne of righteousness and swayeth the scepter of truth and ruleth supreme in the heavens.

The natural inclinations of man have been away from God and toward idola-

try and sin and the scriptures declare that the heart of man is deceitful and above all things desperately wicked. Under these circumstances we would naturally conclude that God would manifest no disposition to remember man.

The insignificance of man would again appear to be demonstrated by his frailty and the brevity of his life.

Man that is born of woman declares Job, is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down, he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not.

Furthermore the apparent inferiority of man when compared to the mighty works of God in the starry heavens. This thought almost non plussed the Psalmist and he cried out, When I consider thy heavens the works of thy fingers the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him or the son of man that thou visitest him.

But no sooner do we turn our attention to the origin of man but this apparent inferiority disappears and the superiority of man becomes at once manifest. The language employed by the great Jehovah in the creation of the universe at once demonstrates very conclusively the superiority of man over all the other works of God's creation. Holy writ declares that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

And God said let there be light. And God said let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters and thus this language is repeated concerning all the other works of creation but when we come to the creation of man a consultation takes place between the Holy Trinity, and God said let us make man.

The superiority of man becomes obvious again from the fact that the creation was on an ascending instead of a descending scale and began with that which was least perfect and ended with that which was most perfect. Man being the crowning work of God's creation.

The superiority of man is especially emphasized when God said let us make man in our image after our likeness. Image and likeness denotes the likeliest image—the nearest to God of any of the visible creatures. Man was not made in the likeness of any of the visible creatures that went before him but in the likeness of his Creator. Yet still between God and man there is an infinite distance and Christ only is the express image of his person as the son of the Father having the same divine nature.

It is only some of God's honor that is put upon man who is God's image as the shadow in the glass or the king's impress upon the coin.

God's image upon man consists of three things:

1. In his nature and constitution not in his body for God is a spirit.

2. In his place and authority. Let us make man in our image and then have dominion, said God.

3. In his purity and rectitude. God's image upon man consists in knowledge of righteousness and true holiness.

Here then we have a creature composed of flesh and spirit, heaven and earth, allied to both worlds having entire dominion upon earth and the divine capacities for honoring and glorifying God in heaven.

And now when all things were in readiness, when the great architect had prepared the home for man as the bridegroom would prepare the home for the bride, or as the royal palace is completed for the reception of the king, when everything was made beautiful, magnificent, majestic, man is placed in the world, not as an ordinary creature but as a king to rule over all the visible creatures of earth and to honor and glorify God in heaven.

But a great transformation takes place. Man by transgression defaced the divine image and his moral judgments became weakened and darkened, his moral feelings became deadened and perverted, and his strongest moral impulses became continually inclined toward sin. And thus we have man in his depraved and sinful state going on in his downward career, every transgression confirming him more and more in his depraved nature, and every sin hurling him farther and farther away from God. And thus we find him sinking lower and lower in the scale of degradation until he becomes more like the wild beast of the forest than a man created in the image of God.

Plunged in this sea of darkness he worshiped the serpent as his God and slew his own brother to satisfy his hunger and appease the wrath of his Deity. And we are shocked beyond measure that human society should ever fall so low as it is portrayed to us by the apostle in the 1st chapter of Romans. And yet under certain environments man rose and fell in civilization like the waves of the sea and all along the history of the world man demonstrated his superiority as an intellectual force and left his shining mark to astonish all succeeding ages of his power and wisdom. Cities and nations were built by his genius, kingdoms and empires were reared at his command.

The pyramids afraid that man might be underrated in the coming ages rose in majestic splendor to testify to the wisdom, power and genius of man.

The hanging gardens of Babylon rose toward the vaulted skies until they became one of the seven wonders of the world that all men might know the su-